

**Committee on Natural
Resources Full Committee**

**Legislative
Hearing Webex**

October 1st, 2020

12:00 p.m.

Legislative Hearing on

H.R. 5986

October 17, 2020

Response of Dr. Robert D. Bullard to:

**Questions from Rep. Dingell for Dr. Robert D. Bullard, Professor of Urban
Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University**

**Dr. Bullard, how do NEPA protections been successfully used to protect
vulnerable communities from the worst impacts of industrial and extractive activity?**

DR. BULLARD: NEPA has been used successfully over the years in providing residents in vulnerable communities a say and that all residents and communities can voice their concerns, objections and opposition in permitting of industrial facilities and federal projects (ranging from highways to pipelines) and mandating government agencies consider the environmental impacts of projects, including any potential costs and consequences for nearby communities, before those projects go forward. NEPA has been a major tool use to protect low-income and people of color communities that are often disproportionately affected by polluting facilities by ensuring that all adverse impacts of projects are fully examined, and that public input from impacted communities is considered.

**Dr. Bullard, how would these changes impact ordinary Americans' ability to have
a voice in major projects like pipelines or extractive activity that directly impacts their
communities?**

DR. BULLARD: The Trump administration's weakening the scope of NEPA, exemptions and dismantling of core protections all undermine key aspects of the NEPA process for all

Americans. However, these changes will fall heaviest on vulnerable environmental justice communities that are already overburdened with pollution and environmental health threats and who have been historically excluded from major decisions that affect them.

Dr. Bullard, how would comprehensive legislation like the Environmental Justice for All Act address some of the shortcomings of current protections for at-risk communities?

DR. BULLARD: The Environmental Justice Act for All strengthens equal environmental protection under the law and emphasizes the importance of science and research in addressing cumulative burden of exposure to multiple pollution sources on the health and well-being of environmental justice communities. And as the nation moves to a clean energy economy and transitions away from greenhouse gas-dependent economies, the legislation supports a fair and just transition for communities and workers, especially low-wage and people of color workers who historically have been left behind by past economic transitions.